



Summary of Recommended Benchmarks

The only way to gauge progress on transportation challenges is to set specific targets and track government performance. The commission has outlined groundbreaking measures that would establish transportation goals and benchmarks and hold government officials accountable for achieving them.

No city street, county road or state highway will be in poor condition. In 1971, about 30% of the state's highways were in poor condition, but through consistent funding, that figure declined to less than 10% by 1998. Data on the condition of city and county roads are currently being collected. (*Benchmarks 1, 2 & 3*)

No bridge will be structurally or seismically unsafe. The state has been actively pursuing a program to retrofit bridges and structures identified by risk level. Over 300 bridges have been retrofitted at a cost of approximately \$40 million. However, almost 1,000 bridges remain to be repaired in the two highest risk levels. (*Benchmarks 4 & 5*)

Traffic congestion on urban interstate highways and delay per driver will be significantly reduced and no worse than the national mean. Traffic congestion in Washington is among the nation's worst, especially in the central Puget Sound area. For example, the Seattle-Everett metropolitan area experienced 70 hours of average delay per driver in 1997 compared to the national average of 40 hours. (*Benchmarks 6 & 7*)

Vehicle miles traveled per capita will not increase over 2000 levels. In the last 20 years, Washington's population has grown 40% while total vehicle miles traveled has grown 60%. However, the number of miles driven per capita has held relatively steady at 9,000 miles per person per year since 1990. (*Benchmark 8*)

The non-auto share of commuter trips by transit, bicycles, and other choices in urban centers will increase. The trend from 1980 to 1990 was a declining share of trips made by means other than autos. That trend will need to be reversed if growth is to be accommodated in urban areas. (*Benchmark 9*)

The administrative costs as a percent of transportation spending at the state, county and city levels should improve to the median in the short-term and to the most efficient quartile nationally in the longer term. Using federal government data, WSDOT ranks high in administrative costs along with states such as California, New York and Illinois. Administrative costs for the state, counties and cities grew considerably faster than inflation and outpaced spending on maintenance and construction. (*Benchmark 10*)

Washington's public transit agencies will achieve the median cost per vehicle revenue hour of peer group transit agencies, adjusting for regional cost of living. Washington's transit agencies have consistently ranked high in operating costs compared to agencies of similar size around the country. Since Initiative 695, transit revenues have been greatly reduced, resulting in cutbacks in administration, planning and customer service. Eventually, there may be cuts in operations. (*Benchmark 11*)

Benchmarks To Be Furthered Developed

The following benchmarks are recommended for further development by the proposed Transportation Accountability Commission that will monitor and track benchmark progress. The Accountability Commission should develop metrics and identify targets and responsibility for these benchmarks.

Traffic Safety Benchmark: Traffic accidents will continue to decline. Washington state has slightly less than 1.5 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles, which is less than the national average of about 1.7

Freight Mobility Benchmark: Freight movement and growth in trade-related freight should be accommodated in the transportation system. Growth in trade-related freight movements by truck (up over seventeen percent annually in the 1991-98 timeframe) and by railcars (up about nine percent annually in the 1991-98 timeframe) exceeded other economic growth rates. The Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) should be involved in developing additional benchmarks of freight movement and the supporting data to monitor progress.

Air Quality Benchmark: Maintain air quality (carbon monoxide and ozone) at federally required levels. Recently air quality has come close to exceeding allowable levels. Federal law requires that regions be sanctioned by loss of federal funds if not in compliance. The proposed accountability commission should consider measuring greenhouse gases, particulates, and visibility when data and appropriate standards are available.

Project Cost Benchmark: Improve operations, maintenance, and project delivery costs. Create benchmarks for the operations and maintenance and capital project delivery functions of transportation agencies, parallel to that suggested for their administrative costs. The new accountability commission that monitors and tracks benchmark progress is directed to develop metrics to compare Washington's project development, design, permitting and construction costs with best practices nationally.

Transportation Revenue Benchmark: Ensure that transportation spending keeps pace with growth. Washington's transportation system must not be allowed to fall behind the pace of its population and economic growth. The accountability commission should develop a benchmark that monitors transportation revenues and how they track transportation needs.

Person Delay Benchmark: Reduce overall hours of travel delay per person in congested corridors. The new accountability commission should develop and track a benchmark of person delay that can be used across all modes of travel.